



Black Saturday and the Victorian bushfires of February 2009: A descriptive survey of nurses who assisted in the pre-hospital setting

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Year: 2010
Journal: Collegian (Royal College of Nursing, Australia). 17 (4): 153-159

Abstract:

BACKGROUND: In February 2009, bushfires devastated the state of Victoria, Australia, resulting in the loss of property and life--this event was named 'Black Saturday'. Pre, during and post the impact of this event, health care professionals, such as nursing members of St John Ambulance Australia, provided clinical care in the pre-hospital environment. There is a paucity of literature regarding the clinical and disaster background, education and preparedness of those health care professionals who assist in similar emergencies, as such the characteristics of responders are not well understood. **METHOD:** This research used a retrospective descriptive postal survey design, to survey nursing members of St John Ambulance Australia regarding their nursing experience; pre-hospital experience; disaster education, training and experience; and their role during the response to the 2009 Victorian bushfires. **RESULTS:** A total of 53 nurses were approached for inclusion in this research, of which 24 (45%) voluntarily participated. Males represented 46% and females represented 54% of participants. Participants had more combined years of nursing experience in the medical and surgical environments, then other areas of practice. Post-graduate critical care nursing was the primary area of completed post-graduate education. The previous disaster experience of participants was principally related to bushfire emergency response. Most participants had undertaken disaster related education, however this varied in type and duration. Similarly, most had participated in training or mock disasters; however this was commonly not related to bushfire emergencies. During the response to the Victorian bushfires, those nurses who undertook a clinical role did so at a staging area, caring for fire fighters and working with other members of their organisation. Half of the participants undertook an administrative role. **CONCLUSIONS:** This research has provided insight into the characteristics and level of preparedness, of nurses who responded to the 2009 Victorian bushfires. Previously, such information has not been available in the literature. In this research, males were overrepresented when compared to the national average of nurses. The most amount of nursing experience was in the medical and surgical environment, this is consistent with national nursing workforce trends. Whilst most had clinical experience in bushfires, no training or mock scenarios focused specifically to bushfires. There is a need to explore further, the various roles undertaken by nurses during response, as this research has focused on one event--the 2009 Victorian bushfires.

Source: Ask your librarian to help locate this item.

Resource Description

Exposure : ☒

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Extreme Weather Event

Extreme Weather Event: Wildfires

Geographic Feature: ☒

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location: ☒

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

Non-United States: Australasia

Health Impact: ☒

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Health Outcome Unspecified

Medical Community Engagement: ☒

resource focus on how the medical community discusses or acts to address health impacts of climate change

A focus of content

Mitigation/Adaptation: ☒

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern: ☒

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Workers

Resource Type: ☒

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Resilience: ☒

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

A focus of content

Timescale: ☒

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified